1: Kroeber E-5 (1901) 1908
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

A wife inherited practically nothing from her husband. If she had been faithful to him and had been of a good disposition, her parents-in-law might give her a certain number of horses or other property. The tent was considered the woman's possession while she lived with her husband; but on his death, even this was no longer her property. If the tent was worth keeping at all, it generally went to the dead man's sister, if she was newly married. A man, on the contrary, inherited his wife's property, though he generally gave back part of it to her relatives.

A woman, on her husband's death, went back to live with her parents, or, if these were dead, with her brother, uncle, or other relative. An old woman, on the death of her husband, generally went to live with her children, most frequently with a daughter.

On the death of a brother, especially a beloved one, or of his father or his son, a man cut his hair and went out naked (with only a buffalo robe) on the prairie to cry from morning until late at night. Women, besides cutting their hair, and cutting themselves (especially on the leg) until they bled, would also go out to cry, naked from the waist up. A sister cut herself for a brother, but a mother mourning for a child underwent the most pain. Of course the mourning was greatest for an only child. In such a case, parents might give away everything in their tent and nearly all their horses, stripping themselves of property so thoroughly as almost to go naked. Some mourners fasted for a number of days. If, while a person was crying on the prairie, one should in joke attempt to scare him, he might kill the disturber. Mourners were the bravest people in war, caring about no danger whatever.

Burial was in trees, on high rocks, or in caves inaccessible to wolves and coyotes. The corpse was wrapped in a burial robe.

A menstruating woman was called niniitixtj. It is said that she did not retire to a separate lodge, or eat separately from her family; but she did not approach a sick patient, because of the evil effect she would have on his condition by her presence. Some women were said to wear a breech-cloth during their menstruation.

In childbirth, women either lay or knelt. They grasped a stick supported in a horizontal position by two upright forked sticks set in the ground. After the umbilical cord had been severed, the end was left on the child. It was thought to fall off on the fourth day. The woman who had cut the umbilical cord received as a gift the knife she had used. A woman who washed a new-born child was given the vessel in which it was washed. The afterbirth was hung in a tree. If it were left lying to be handled, the child would be afflicted with sores. For three or four days after birth, the child was given suck by other women than its mother. This statement apparently refers chiefly to a woman's first child.

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

The above case illustrates how it was possible for a man, in spite of a poor start in life, to rise. Children were instructed by their elders, as was Thick by his maternal uncle: "Above all things try to have horses. Try to have property and whatever you have, take care of it. By having lots of horses and property, people will respect you and look upon you as somebody." 556 867

Again Coming Daylight stated: "They used to think more of horses than of anything else. They were sure proud of owning a pinto pony. In telling stories when they wanted to describe the best they could think of they would say: 'You should have seen her horse—it was a big pinto pony.'" And in telling of a relative of hers, Woman Chief, Coming Daylight said: "Her husband was not very handsome, but they were well-to-do and she always rode top horses." 554 231

While all horses were as a rule well cared for, special attention was devoted to the buffalo horses. On the hunt, for instance, these horses would be led along unburdened by pack or rider to keep them fresh. They were ridden only for the actual chase and after the kill were turned loose to roll around and graze like young colts. When the butchering was completed the meat was packed on other horses and the swift buffalo horses were then led home again. These horses were ridden on social and ceremonial occasions, when their owners wished to show off, and of course the soldier societies were well mounted, but such use amounted to no more than a good work-out, and these valuable horses were never abused nor wilfully exhausted. 231

Children were exhorted to take care of their property, especially of horses, and the girls were advised that "a mare is worth everything—it increases—treat her well." It was stated that some attention was given to breeding. A man might judge that a colt showed possibilities of becoming a fast horse. If it fulfilled the early promise the colts it sired would be watched. The less likely of these would be castrated. Likewise, a good mare would, if possible, be retained by the owner for breeding. A man who owned a particularly good buffalo horse might, on his deathbed, either order that it be killed at his grave or give it to some relative he knew cared well for horses, with instructions never to abuse it nor give it away. [867] [763 [768] 431]

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

daughter, and might receive gifts from relatives, but would otherwise have few opportunities of obtaining horses.

In former times the rules regarding inheritance were fairly simple. If a man died, his relatives took the more valuable livestock, while anyone was free to come into the lodge and take any other personal property of the deceased which was not to be buried with him. The man's relatives would not, however, take the horses which belonged to his wife or wives, or which had been given before his death to his children. When a woman died she usually would have little valuable property in any case, but, again, any other woman might rush in and strip the lodge of whatever personal property might be therein, including food. The close family of the deceased were "so grief-stricken that they wouldn't notice who takes what," and "a husband would never keep anything of his wife's." It was said, too, that "women were braver than men in disposing of their property before death, and often gave gifts of personal property to those they wished to have them."

In objects derived from the white man, the value put upon them was mainly utilitarian. For example, in matching wagers on one occasion a man put up a gold watch. There was no one on the other side who had a watch to offer, but a spy-glass was considered the equivalent. It was explained that the value of the watch in dollars--whether it had a fine gold case or not--would not be taken into consideration. The question in matching was to find things of equal value to the Indian in his way of life. To illustrate this The Boy told of a gift to his father, Lame Bull, from a white trader on the Saskatchewan, of a hobble which locked. "Perhaps this didn't have a high value in dollars, but it was considered extremely valuable by Lame Bull because it saved him many a race horse. Even though the enemy might sneak a horse out of camp, being unable to unfasten the hobble, he would have to abandon the valuable horse before getting very far away."

On the other hand, while utility was certainly an important consideration in the Gros Ventres' evaluation of goods produced by themselves, various other elements were taken into account. A horse procured from the enemy was perhaps the most valuable of all things to the Gros Ventres; aside from other considerations, a man would have risked his life to obtain it and that in itself lent

2: Flannery E-5 (1940-1948) 1953
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

buried with its owner. For a woman, her clothing, and sometimes even her pots and pans, were put with her body. It was stated explicitly, however, that food was never placed with the body by the Gros Ventres, although it was recognized that the Assiniboine did so. 764

A widow would burn the things of her husband which were not placed with his body nor taken by his relatives. She would then be smudged with sage and, should she have kissed the corpse, her mouth was smudged four times and she was made to spit each time. 768 783

These practices were seemingly tied up with two beliefs,—the first being that if objects were not placed with the body, the deceased would return to look for the things valued in life; the second, that the recently deceased try to lure the living to join them. The first point was explained by Mary, whose mother had told her: "Everyone likes his own things and some hate to leave them when they die. That is why we used to put personal belongings with the corpse. It might be that there is some one thing that a person wants which has been 'left behind,' so he will come back to seek it. Sometimes when you are alone you might hear a rattling of the dishes or a whistling sound, and you would know that it was some loved one who had died and who was looking for something." 764 775

As proof of the second point, the following experience was offered by Singer. "When I was ill during a smallpox epidemic, I had a dream. I dreamed that my sister, who had died in this same epidemic, appeared to me and said: 'Our mother wants you. Come with me.' My father, who was actually nursing me, seemed to be standing to one side. He told my sister: 'You have had no pity on us. You didn't fight for life. What are you coming after her for? You go by yourself.' But pretty soon my sister came again and said: 'Now this time I want you to come because our mother wants you.' So I agreed: 'All right. I will go with you.' My sister took me to a shabby-looking little old lodge and I didn't feel right about going in there but I thought: 'Well, to please them I will look in there anyway.' There was someone there in bed and my sister was toward the back of the lodge and my mother was on the other side. My mother told me: 'Here, sit by your sister.' She 775 787

6: Cooper E-5 (1931-1940) 1944
NQ13 Gros Ventre NQ13

of men, including Stiff Arm, a noted Gros Ventre medicine man, who has since died. Only a few details were obtained: the rite within a regular tepee with spectators present; the tying of the performer with ropes, his escape therefrom, and after his escape the ropes in a ball which could not be untied; the summoning of the spirit of the deceased relative by the performer; the shaking of the tent "as in a cyclone" when the spirit came; talking "from above" by the spirit; singing by the performer and by the others in the tepee.

Later in August-September, 1939 and 1940, fuller information on the shaking tent rite was secured in connection with a general study of Gros Ventre society and religion, from The Boy and Thick, two of the older and best informed men among the Gros Ventres. These fuller data here follow.

Spiritual helpers among the Gros Ventres were of two kinds, ghosts of deceased persons and beings who had never been men. The latter, the ordinary guardian spirits, by far the more common, do not concern us here as they do not enter at all into the Gros Ventre shaking tent rite. Only ghosts so enter.

A ghost helper, tsatsawâ'ᵃ (-â- and superior a nasalized), was usually acquired in the following way. It was not sought by fasting and crying out on the hills, the customary procedure for acquiring non-ghostly guardian spirits and power. In fact there was either no quest of any kind or at most a somewhat indirect one. The usual sequence was as follows. A surviving relative would keep in his or her possession some memento or keepsake—something the deceased had prized greatly, some belonging such as a whip, or a tooth or bit of hair of the departed one. The keepsake was kept, not worn. It was kept not for the purpose of acquiring the ghost of the deceased relative (a father or other close relative), but solely or at least chiefly, so far as I could gather, out of regard for the departed.

In most cases where such mementos were kept nothing happened. In some few cases, however, the keeping led to the acquisition of a ghost helper by the keeper. The first intimations the keeper had of the intentions of the deceased relative were knockings, or whistlings, or other kinds of disturbance around